

THE EAST SUSSEX & WEST KENT

UNITARIAN MAGAZINE,

*A Sectarian Journal for the Churches at Hastings, Battle, Northiam,
Rye, Lewes, Tenterden, Ashford, Bessell's Green, Brighton and Ditchling.*

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CONTENTS:

- Introductory Article.
- Unitarianism in Hastings.
- The Growth of Democracy in England.
- Friendship.
- Unitarianism—What Is It?
- Confirmation Services.
- Denominational Intelligence.

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THE EAST SUSSEX & WEST KENT

UNITARIAN + MAGAZINE.

VOL. I.

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No. I.

NOTICE TO READERS.

The Editor wishes it to be distinctly understood that the views expressed in any Articles which may appear in this Journal are only those of the writers, and are not to be taken as the authoritative opinions of the Unitarians as a particular sect. Contributions of a general character are cordially invited for insertion in the Magazine, but the right of selection is reserved, and rejected papers cannot be returned unless accompanied by the necessary number of postage stamps. Items of local sectarian news will also be welcomed. All literary communications should be sent to the Editor, the Rev. J. CLAYTON WILLIAMS, 19, Mann Street, Hastings; and all business inquiries addressed to the Printer and Publisher, Mr. EDWARD BALKHAM, 4, Albion Place, West Hill, Hastings.

Introduction.

THE lack of intercourse between the Unitarian Churches of East Sussex and West Kent, is felt by many to be a source of weakness. Cut off as our congregations are from communion with other Christian sects, the need is the greater for conscious fraternal bonds uniting our various chapels. When the Kent and Sussex Unitarian Christian Association was its active operation, the need was supplied. Now that no society of the kind exists, the want is not met. In isolation, we have to struggle with difficulties which might be overcome by union: we require the stimulus which fellowship best can give. With this conviction we begin our new enterprise, trusting to be supported by the members of our "Household of Faith" in those portions of the two counties in which we hope to circulate our journal. Two things will especially distinguish this magazine:

(1). Free expression of opinion. As an organ of our Free Churches it will set no limit to the utterance of true thought. It will be open to all theological, political, social, and scientific convictions. Whoever has a word of truth to speak may speak it on these pages. Granting this freedom as a right, it is assumed that no contributors will abuse it by flippant or ribald attacks upon what to them is *not* true.

(2). Then these pages will be open to record intelligence concerning our East Sussex and West Kent Churches, and suggestions for the more successful working of our existing organisations. It is sad to think of the number of once promising congregations in these and the adjoining counties, which have ceased to exist, and the number of chapels once open, which are now closed. We shall welcome and be thankful for any proposals which open before us a missionary work, and help us to recover lost ground. To sustain and increase our own life as churches, we must endeavour to impart that life to others "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth." To husband power, we must expend power. And the union of our congregations in some aggressive enterprise will be strength to us.

The Editor will, therefore, be glad to receive suggestions with a view of spreading our principles, and breaking up fresh ground for the seeds of our simple and blessed Gospel. With the hope of making our brotherhood more than a phrase, and with the desire for some concerted action amongst ourselves, to give a wider circulation to our "glad tidings" this new venture is made, and the prayer of the promoters is that their lowly effort may grow to be a thing of light and power among our East Sussex and West Kent Churches.

THE EDITOR.

Unitarianism in Hastings.

THE Unitarians have a history which for attractiveness of detail and variety of incident is not probably equalled by that of any other religious body of people in the world. Their traditions, though not fanciful, are antique; their theology, though not complicated, is ancient; and their principles, though far from being obsolete, are curiously old. They have suffered, flourished, and struggled under every condition of ecclesiastical existence, and they have survived with memories which are sacred to all lovers of religious liberty and freedom. They are not great in numbers, it is true, but that is because they look more to the development of their leading ideas than to their growth as a particular Christian sect. This is only viewing the Unitarians from an historical standpoint, without expressing any opinion whatever as to the spiritual value of their theology, and in looking at them in this way we can see all that is remarkable in their records without plunging into the mysteries of their distinguishing doctrines, if they can be said to have any as a sect, more than is actually necessitated by the external relation these dogmas may have to the secular life of the Church. If we remember this, then, we can turn to the history of Unitarianism in Hastings and St. Leonards with something like real interest, for it is little different to that of the general body all over Great Britain and Ireland. The Unitarians began here in a quiet way, and they have grown steadily, if very slowly, ever since. They have not been physically persecuted, or, in accordance with the invariable rule, they would have flourished to a much greater extent than they have, and they have not been either prominently or frequently attacked in a controversial sense, or, as past records prove, they would at least have been able to hold their own on any particular doctrinal points on which they might have been assailed. Their position now is altered from what it was twenty or fifteen years ago. We are able at this period to look back over an era which presents some startling changes in the religious world—such changes, indeed, that we can only thoroughly appreciate them by comparisons. Thomas Timpson, in his “Church History Through All Ages,” which was first published about 1830, observes:—“Socinians, or, as they call themselves,

‘Unitarians,’ we cannot acknowledge as forming any part of the Church of God; because they reject the Christian doctrine of atonement, and most of the distinguishing peculiarities of the Gospel. Most sincerely, therefore, do we rejoice that their congregations are rapidly declining in England.” (pp. 452-3.) In 1886, however, the Honourable and Rev. William Henry Fremantle, one of the Canons of the Diocese of Canterbury, in an article called “Is a Unitarian Entitled to Christian Fellowship?” which he contributed to *The Christian Reformer*, remarks:—“My own belief is that the Unitarian controversy, like those which divide other denominations of Christians from each other, is, to a great extent, a thing of the past, and that we can now, without compromise, and with a good conscience, cease from the imputation of unfaithfulness on the one side, and of superstition on the other, and receive one another as Christians, whose differences may supplement and aid each other” (vol. 2, p. 131). This indicates a great advance in liberal theological thought within recent years, and such an alteration must be borne in mind in considering the history of the local Unitarian body. Our first actual knowledge of Unitarianism in this watering-place takes us as far back as the first decades of the present century. In 1819-20, Mr. Richard Wright, a zealous evangelical missionary employed by the London Unitarian Christian Fund Society, made a tour in Sussex, Kent, and Surrey, visiting, among other places in the locality, Battle, Catsfield, Netherfield, Ninfield, and Northiam. He was a great friend of Mr. Thomas Kenward, of Battle, the father of Mr. T. W. Kenward, who takes so large an interest in the Hastings Church at the present time. Mr. Wright's account of his journeys in these counties, addressed to the Rev. W. Johnson Fox, the President of the Fund Society, who was elected M.P. for Oldham in 1847, 1852, 1857, and 1859, was embodied in the annual report of the institution for 1820, and was subsequently printed in *The Christian Reformer, or New Evangelical Miscellany* for August, September, and October, 1821. In this narrative he says in one place: “I was anxious to have preached at Hastings, but no place could be procured for the purpose. An auctioneer would have let us have had a room which the Methodists occupy on the Sunday and one evening in the week,

but the Methodists told him if he let us have the use of it on any evening they would quit it. However, I hope a room will be obtained for Unitarian worship at Hastings before any great length of time, as that town is rapidly increasing, and is a place of considerable resort in the bathing season" (vol. 7, p. 287). The borough then had a population of about 6,000 inhabitants. Mr. Wright's wish might have been a very ardent one, and no doubt it was, but, at all events, it was not fulfilled till 40 years later, and during all the intervening time there is nothing that can, by the greatest ingenuity, be described as an incident in the history of the sect in Hastings. The Unitarian Church was founded here about 26 years ago by Mr. Samuel Sharpe and his four daughters—Emily, Matilda, Mary, and Eleanor—who were tolerably frequent visitors to this town, until within some years ago. Mr. Sharpe, who was a member of the now defunct large banking firm of Messrs. Rogers, Olding, Sharpe and Boycott, lived at Highbury Place, in London, and was a rather remarkable man, even in an age noticeable for striking personages. He was born in 1799, and was instructed at a school at Walthamstowe, where the Earl of Beaconsfield also received his education, which was kept by the Rev. Eliezer Cogan—a learned cleric who is said to have read more Greek in his time than any other living man. Mr. Sharpe was a famous Hebrew scholar, an accomplished Egyptologist, an accurate and wise translator of the Christian Scriptures, and an extensive writer on Biblical antiquities. He was a nephew on his mother's side of Samuel Rogers, the poet, who was well-known as the friend of Charles James Fox and Henry Grattan. Mr. Sharpe acted as President of the British and Foreign Unitarian Association in 1869-70, and of Manchester New College in 1876-8. He only died as recently as 1882. His friends at Hastings were Mrs. Ann Samworth and her daughters, one of whom married Mr. C. Thornely the painter, Mr. William Ransom, and Mr. Thomas Holwell Cole. Mr. Sharpe took some little interest in public proceedings in Hastings, when he resided here, and among other bodies he was connected with was the Philosophical and Historical Society, to the members of which he read several valuable papers. He stayed at first in Breeds Place, or on the Marine

Parade, but latterly he lived up in the Old Town, towards Clive Vale. Mr. Peter William Clayden, who has been a Unitarian minister at Nottingham, Rochdale, and Boston, and who contested unsuccessfully in the Liberal interest, Nottingham, in 1868, the Norwood Division of Lambeth, in 1885, and the borough of North Islington in 1886, has written a very readable account of Mr. Sharpe's life, under the title of "Samuel Sharpe: Egyptologist, and Translator of the Bible." In that interesting work occur several passages which bear on Mr. Sharpe's connection with this town. In 1840, it would seem the first visit was made, for during that year Miss Emily spent a short time here with her aunt, Miss Catherine Sharpe, her father's half-sister (p. 89). The next reference is one of a more painful character. Mr. Clayden, referring to some domestic troubles which befell Mr. Sharpe in 1856-7, says: "His second son, Albert"—the first, who died in 1861 was named Frederick—"had long been in precarious health. For some years consumptive symptoms had been present, and latterly the disease had been fully manifested, and he had spent each winter at Hastings" (p. 221). It may be added that the poor young fellow expired here in 1857. He used to stay, as a rule, with Mr. Cole, to whom Mr. Sharpe had been introduced by Mrs. Samworth. The principal passage in the biography, however, is one to which the subject of it contributes largely himself. Mr. Sharpe, in his autobiographical remains, from which Mr. Clayden quotes, writing about 1860, remarks: "Being now at leisure, I gave more attention to the attempt which was always being made by some of us to spread Unitarian opinions. . . . I felt that the spread of our unpopular opinions was a great and good cause, and as I was independent of the world's frowns and smiles, I could not do anything more useful than give my countenance to that course of action" (p. 225). Mr. Clayden then goes on to say: "Among the efforts thus undertaken was that of establishing a Unitarian chapel at Hastings. The family had, unfortunately, much to do with that pleasant watering-place. Albert had spent several winters there, with some of his sisters for companions," continues Mr. Clayden, repeating himself perhaps unavoidably, "and soon after his death his youngest sister Eleanor showed symptoms of the same fatal disease.

She, too, had to be sent to Hastings for the winter, and though she was usually accompanied by her eldest sister, all the other members of the family, the father among them, were frequent visitors. They were not accustomed to neglect public worship, but highly appreciated its value for instruction, consolation, and inward renewal, yet as earnest believers in Unitarian Christianity they were unable to join with profit in Trinitarian services. If Jesus Christ is not God, He is not a proper object of worship. If the doctrine of the Atonement is a superstitious dream of the Middle Ages, teaching which is permeated with it is more shocking than it is edifying; and prayers which assume it, and are based upon it, can have no meaning to those who disbelieve and reject it. Hence the necessity for special Unitarian services, and hence the justification of the separate existence of the Unitarian body. With this feeling Miss Emily Sharpe endeavoured to establish a Unitarian congregation at Hastings" (p. 225-6). Miss Emily, as will be gathered from the preceding quotation, took the principal part in starting Unitarian services here, for it was she who looked up the best known local members of the faith, and persuaded them to commence public worship in this borough. Miss Sharpe knew that Mr. Samuel Collier Burgess, who then carried on business as an ironmonger in George Street, but who now resides at Crawley in Sussex, was a Unitarian, and she suggested to him the desirability of forming a church for the district. "I gave her," he says, "the names of all the Unitarians I knew in the town," and she called upon them, roused them to energetic action, and thus collected together what was probably the first congregation of its persuasion in this orthodox borough. A room at the Public Hall, then of course known as the Music Hall, was accordingly engaged of Mr. Charles Lockey and Mr. George Lindridge, who were at that time lessees of the building, which they had only taken over about two years before. The first two services were held one Sunday in March, 1860, and were attended each time by about a dozen persons. The Rev. Thomas Carter, who was educated at Carmarthen and Manchester New College, and who was then the minister of the Lewes Unitarian Church, having commenced his ministry four years previously, preached the opening sermons, and had some rather lively experiences to impress the visit on his memory.

The weather was very wet, and the roof of the apartment in which the worship was conducted was far from sound. The water dripped down the walls of the room, and the fire which the friends tried to light turned to smoke, and filled the place with dense vapour that made it almost untenable. However, things passed off as satisfactorily as could be expected under the circumstances, and the little band of heterodox Christians looked forward hopefully to the prospects of the future. Mr. Carter, it may be added, is still alive, and looks after one of the churches at Rochdale, in Lancashire.

BEATRICE ROSEBERY.

(To be continued.)

—:O:—

Friendship.

WHAT a wonderfully beautiful thing true friendship is; *true*, that is, not the mere acquaintanceship of which every one sees and shares in plenty, but an equal, unselfish love, that calls forth, strengthens, and even creates the noblest qualities in our nature. There is an old proverb which says:—"There is always the one who kisses and the one who offers the cheek;" but surely this is *not* always and of necessity true. I should indeed be loth to believe that human nature has fallen so low—"has fallen,"—for it was not always so; there was a time when a man wrote of friendship in a way which shows that he at any rate knew it to be something nobler and truer than this proverb would indicate. Surely the friendship between David and Jonathan, which was so great that Samuel (?) writes, "The soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul," was an equal friendship? "What has been will be"—to me there is something divine and yet intensely human in such friendship. How often a good true friendship stands in the place of conscience to the *alter ego*; when our sense of right is failing, when our charity is turning bitter, and all the world seems to ring hollow; then the thought of the one friend we trust restores our sight, sweetens, and gives back our love of humanity and shows the world in its brightest, let us trust, its truest light. True friendship is seldom demonstrative, the less so the truer may be said to be the almost universal ratio, our deepest emotions, whether love or hate, joy or despair, seldom find expression in words, for the very simple reason we can find none strong enough. Friendship is as far removed from hero-worship as it is possible for two good things to be; for totally different *no* two gifts can be while each comes from the "All-Father." Both are blessings and both great and most kindly teachers; still the difference is there. Hero-worship may be a brother of the blind young god, but what friend is ever blind to our faults? Do they not rather endear us one to another? An

American author has said "We don't want to be with angels till we're angels ourselves." It has often been remarked that friends have strangely opposite dispositions, at least if what is but the fulfilment of a law of nature may be called strange. Most of us have a very keen consciousness of some at least of our own failings, and naturally we are quick to notice the absence of these failings in others, and let us hope, as quick to admire. I have said that a friend will often stand in place of conscience, of course this "ought not so to be," but the world is a long while learning wisdom, and till men learn to love good for its own sake let us be thankful if they will "eschew evil," for what, though less noble, will long be a more potent motive. And if friendships have so great an influence on our lives we should be the more careful how we break them, they are too often severed for want of a little, a very little patience and then perhaps we go through life with an aching void in our hearts, which even time, the great all-healer, fails to cure. But sometimes it is a misfortune not a fault that breaks our friendship—distance, illness, or death part us for the time—and though less bitter the pain is very very hard to bear and we find it difficult to believe that "It is better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all."

C. HAMISH.

—:O:—

The Growth of Democracy in England.

OF the early inhabitants of this island we have little authentic information, and I think I need scarcely refer to them. True we meet with in them indications of British industrial enterprise, which has so largely influenced England's social and political development. But the love of liberty which was in them was held in check by degrading superstitions, and they gave but little promise of a higher civilization. The Roman invasion in the year 56 B.C. was the event which, by producing different classes and interest, and by promoting intercourse with other nations, first started the progress of civil and religious liberty in England. The Romans enjoyed a far higher degree of civilization; they introduced considerable improvements and some free institutions. They built walled towns throughout the country, and maintained communication by good roads. Roman citizens of many races settled in Britain. England was now under a vigorous Roman administration. The larger towns, containing a strong Saxon element in their population, afterwards became almost independent. The 4½ centuries of Roman power, of Roman laws and customs, undoubtedly left their influence to be felt for a long time on the inhabitants of Britain. Still I cannot agree with those who believe it possible to trace the influence of Roman principles in almost every municipal institution of the present time. It seems to me that England has been subject to too many conquests and changes, and too much internal commotion for such to be the case. For a short time after the withdrawal of the Roman power from Britain the Celts again had supreme power, but the Saxons and other Teutonic races soon invaded the country, almost exterminated the Celtic inhabitants, and took

possession of the land. A few of the natives were kept as slaves, whilst others fled to Cornwall, to Wales, and to Scotland. England was now a free state, with Teutonic laws and customs, and even language. The title of king was hereditary, subject to the choice of the Parliament or Witenagemote, who could depose him. The king was also bound to govern according to the laws. The nobles, or earls as they were called, were chiefs of the different tribes. The priests officiated at the various rites and sacrifices, looked after the people's souls and their own bodies. The people themselves were divided into freemen and slaves the slaves being of two classes, the cultivating serf, and the absolute slave. The land was divided into shires, hundreds, parishes, and marks or townships. According to Sir Henry Maine in his "Village Communities" the mark or township "was an organised and self-acting group of Teutonic families, exercising a common proprietorship over a definite tract of land, its mark cultivating its domain on a common system, and sustaining itself by the produce." A system of local self-government was maintained. Every village, hundred, or shire, had its council or gemote, these being under the control of the supreme parliament, the Witenagemote. By the advice of this supreme council the king made laws and levied taxes. The slaves were not represented, but the freemen were admitted to the assemblies, and could signify their approval or disapproval of the proceedings. The supreme council however was in the hands of the nobility. It is to the Saxon administration that we must direct our attention to find the origin of most of our existing institutions. Civilization was rapidly progressing under the Saxons when it was again endangered by Danish invaders. Coming from Norway and Denmark they landed on our coasts and overran the country. They burnt the churches and destroyed towns and villages, killing the inhabitants where they met with resistance. They were, however, arrested in their course of destruction and conquest by Alfred the Great. Accepting the Christian faith many of them remained in England and gradually mixed with the Saxon inhabitants. Later on England was governed by Danish kings for a short period, but they left few traces of their rule, as they governed by almost the same laws as the Saxons. The inhabitants of Lancashire, Yorkshire, and a few other northern counties, are those most influenced by an admixture of Danish blood. After the Danes there was a brief period of Saxon rule, but with the death of Edward the Confessor, trouble began. Harold was undoubtedly the choice of the English people, and as such was the rightful king of England. His claim was disputed by William, Duke of Normandy. Everyone of course knows the result of the Battle of Hastings; how William the Norman defeated Harold and the Saxons, and how he took possession of the land, distributing it amongst the robbers and scheming adventurers who came with him. By the way I cannot understand why anyone should think it an honour to say that some ancestor of theirs "came over" with William the Norman. They don't like to be told that they are descended from apes. But I suppose that cut-throats and other blacks are more respectable ancestors than apes. We are told by some that the Normans were more advanced in civilization than the Saxons. They certainly more advanced in the art of war, which I suppose is the same thing, but very little liberty was to be found in their laws, and

customs. I consider that the Saxons had the advantage in that respect. The Saxons that were spared were brought into subjection as serfs and vassals to the Norman chiefs and barons. These again were vassals to the king. The barons were complete masters of their followers and slaves. They made war upon each other, they robbed the peasants, and laid waste the country. England was governed by a council of barons, priests, and abbots; all offices were filled by Normans, and the people were entirely without representation. Was this an improvement on the Saxon administration? Not quite I think. It certainly was not an encouraging outlook for principles of liberty and freedom. But such a severe system of military despotism could not continue long under these conditions. The barons were too powerful to be agreeable to the king. He therefore made use of his vassals to enforce his commands. In return for their services several privileges were granted. William Rufus promised to redress their grievances as a return for their support. But it is much easier to promise than to perform, and after the need of help was over, it seems that in many cases—I don't refer particularly to this special occasion—the promises were forgotten, or only partially fulfilled. Henry 1st gave the people a charter of liberties, and granted municipal charters to London and other towns. Henry 2nd reduced the power of the barons, demolished many of the castles, and extending the privileges of the people, taking care to extend his own at the same time. The next incident of note was the signing of the Great Charter, or Magna Charta as it was called, by King John. By this Charter freedom from arbitrary imprisonment, judgment by a man's equals, fixed courts of justice, and other provisions, were assured in the interests of all classes alike. On this occasion the people, instead of supporting the Crown, were leagued with the barons, who now became the leaders in advancing the rights of the people. The barons, however, knew how to avail themselves of the situation, and kept the advantages mainly to themselves. This Great Charter was at all events a big jump in the right direction, even though its principles were often disregarded. Sir Erskine May says: "The Great Charter was appealed to as the basis of English freedom. It was confirmed again and again, and, while often violated, its principles were accepted as the constitutional law of England." In 1265 the Commons were for the first time represented in Parliament, owing principally to Simon de Montfort, who led the barons in their contest against Henry 3rd. During the reign of Edward 1st the power of the Parliament was increased. The king was compelled to abandon illegal taxes, and to renew the confirmation of the Great Charter. In 1327 the Parliament assumed the right to depose King Edward 2nd for violation of his coronation oath and a few minor offences. In all these acts the barons took the lead. Whilst looking after their own rights they also extended the power of the people. In Edward 3rd's reign the House of Commons took a position independent of the rest of the council. Amongst other matters they maintained the following principles:—The annual calling of Parliaments, the freedom of election, and the illegality of raising money without the consent of Parliament having been obtained. They also established that every law required the sanction of the king, lords, and commons.

Richard 2nd was restrained and humiliated by the Parliament then sitting and was finally deposed. By all these acts the power of the king was limited whilst the powers and privileges of parliament were defined and established. Serfdom had given way in a great measure to free labour. All would have been well but for the high-handed proceedings of the landowners, who endeavoured to again secure forced labour. Men who had been set free were again reduced to slavery, and others, forbidden to leave the district, were compelled to work, at wages fixed by statute. Can we wonder that this hateful oppression provoked a passionate resistance? When the feeling was at its height the infamous poll-tax was levied. It was then the people rose in rebellion, headed by the celebrated Wat Tyler. In this revolt many excesses were undoubtedly committed, but it is some little satisfaction to know that the Primate and two of the chief officers concerned in the levy of the poll-tax, were beheaded on Tower Hill. As a result of this outbreak many concessions were made to the people by King Richard 2nd. They were, however, afterwards revoked. The power of the Commons now declined, and the barons recovered much of their former domination. The franchise of the burgesses was restricted, and the barons and landowners everywhere influenced the elections. But the sanguinary conflict between the houses of York and Lancaster crushed the power of the barons. So many of them were killed, exiled, or impoverished, that after the battle of Bosworth Henry 7th was able to reign as an absolute monarch. Forster in his "Grand Remonstrance" says—"Of the shattered aristocracy of England, only 29 presented themselves when Henry called his first parliament, and many of these were recent creations." Now was the opportunity for the people to assert their power, but they were so accustomed to rely upon the barons as leaders that they were incapable of action. James Allanson Picton says—"So far were the people's representatives in Parliament from discerning their opportunity in the ruin of the old baronage that, with little resistance, they were made subservient instruments for enriching the crown." Henry 8th was also opposed to liberty and seldom summoned a Parliament except for the purpose of raising money.

GEORGE FRISBY.

(To be concluded.)

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Confirmation Services.

A paper on this subject was read by the Rev. E. S. Anthony M.A., (a stepson of Mrs. L. Anthony, of Hastings), at a Unitarian Sunday School Conference held at Moneyrea, Ireland, in October last. The subject of the essay is one worthy of earnest and unprejudiced consideration, touching as it does the important question—"How can we retain our young people, and attach them to our churches?" and the Editor therefore, bespeaks for the following extracts from the

paper a careful perusal. "We have in our Sunday Schools," says Mr. Anthony, "a number of young people who are growing up into men and women. They will soon be leaving school, and then what will become of them? It is of course our desire that when they leave the school they should attach themselves to the church and take their places as members of the congregation; and it may be presumed that we shall put forth our endeavours to accomplish this result. But if we fail to do this, we shall lose our hold on the young people, and they will slip away from us altogether. . . . Whatever preparatory instruction is given it is very desirable that the entrance of the young people into full church membership should be marked by a solemn service, at which they are received into complete fellowship. Other denominations have their services of this kind, and why should not we follow their example? The Baptists have their ceremony of adult baptism, and there is much to be said in favour of this practice. For my part, however, I prefer the rite of confirmation which is customary in the Church of England. This is a very ancient rite, the origin of which is traced to the apostolic practice recorded in the Book of Acts. There we read that the apostles were in the habit of laying their hands on the newly baptised converts, and praying that they might receive the Holy Spirit. At that time it was a kind of supplement to baptism, and was regarded to some extent as its completion. In course of time, as infant baptism became general, confirmation no longer immediately followed the baptism, but was deferred until the child had obtained years of discretion. The ceremony then acquired a new significance—it became a solemn re-dedication of themselves by the baptised, who now made a public profession of Christian discipleship. By so doing they took upon themselves the promises made on their behalf by their sponsors, who were thus relieved from any further responsibility. In the Roman Catholic Church confirmation is one of the seven sacraments, but it is not considered a sacrament by Protestants. It is in use among the German Lutherans as well as in the Church of England, but the English Puritans discarded it along with the Episcopal form of church government. In so doing, however, they seem to have acted without sufficient reason, for in the rite of confirmation there is nothing

necessarily sacerdotal or superstitious. No doubt, as understood by Roman Catholics and High Churchmen, there is a miraculous efficacy in the laying on of the bishop's hands by which act it is supposed that a supernatural grace is conveyed to the person confirmed; but this is not the Protestant belief. We have an unwilling testimony to the Protestant character of confirmation as practised in the Church of England in an article by the Rev. Dr. F. G. Lee, in *The Nineteenth Century*, a few years ago (Nov. 1881.) The writer, who is an extreme High Churchman, says—"The sacrament of confirmation was altogether lost in the Church of England. The new rite *was* a new rite and nothing more—a rite in which persons themselves openly renewed their baptismal vows, while the chief minister prayed for a blessing upon their public act of self-dedication. It was a rite oftentimes solemn and impressive, but no sacrament." The laying on of hands, moreover, is retained in the case of Presbyterian ordination, without implying any idea of a miraculous efficacy in the act. There is nothing, then, in the rite of confirmation to which we as liberal Christians can reasonably object, and accordingly such services have been held in recent years in various parts of England. They are still somewhat exceptional, and are regarded as more or less of an innovation. Yet the suggestion to adopt this impressive rite is not in reality a new one. In a liturgy, used in one or two of our churches, the second edition of which was published so long ago as 1852, the 'order of confirmation' duly appears among the occasional offices, and is thus referred to in the preface to the first edition:—"The service for confirmation should be universally introduced; or one great duty of the Church towards those whom in infancy it baptised and dedicated to God in the gospel of Christ is neglected, at a critical time of life when such a ceremony is calculated to make a lasting and valuable impression on their minds. To bring the young at any age when they can know the truth, and before the world has had time to alienate their affections from it, or to harden their hearts in despising it, in the presence of the Church, to make a voluntary and solemn expression of their desire to be fully adopted into its communion, is an obvious duty of Christian policy, of the sad effects of the prevalent neglect of which we have innumerable proofs." In the more widely known 'Common Prayer for Christian

Worship,' first published in 1862, and used by a great many of our churches in England, the 'order of confirmation' is also included, and the meaning of the service is thus explained in the introductory address to those about to be confirmed: Dearly beloved, in your infancy, when you could not know the blessedness of the Christian religion, those who best loved you expressed in the most solemn manner, with prayer to almighty God, their desire that you should be partakers of this inestimable blessedness; and pledged themselves to instruct you in the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. You have now reached an age at which it might reasonably be hoped that you would, by your own voluntary act, take upon yourselves the responsibility of a public Christian profession; and forasmuch as you have signified your desire so to do, let me ask you in the presence of this congregation, Will you renounce the fellowship of evil, and endeavour to learn and do the will of God as revealed by Jesus Christ?' Although the service was contained in the book, it has been very generally neglected, though one or two efforts have been made to rescue it from oblivion. One of the earliest confirmation services, perhaps the very earliest ever conducted in a Unitarian place of worship, was held at Nottingham, twenty years ago, and as I was privileged to be present on the occasion, I may perhaps be allowed to give a few personal reminiscences. At that time I was a small boy at school, and I attended the High Pavement Chapel, then under the ministry of the Rev. P. W. Clayden. One Sunday Mr. Clayden spoke from the pulpit on the subject of confirmation, pointing out the fact that we had such a service in our prayer book, and as it was in the book, he presumed it was intended to be used. He thereupon announced his intention of holding a confirmation service, and of conducting a preparatory class, to which he invited all young persons of sixteen and upwards who might be willing to join. The confirmation took place upon Whit Sunday; the young people about to be confirmed were sixty in number, and they occupied the front pews. The chief part of the service was conducted by the Rev. John James Taylor, Principal of Manchester New College, who delivered an appropriate address. I was not myself one of those who were confirmed, as I was not old

enough at the time to be admitted; but though I was only a spectator, the service made a deep and lasting impression upon me, and I longed for the time to come when I should participate in such a service. The opportunity never came, however, and I have never been present at a confirmation service in one of our churches since that day. Although the experiment was very successful it was not generally taken up. A few similar services have since been held here and there; but, so far as I am aware, the rite as not taken its place as a recognised institution in any of our congregations with the exception of Kidderminster. At this place under the energetic ministry of the Rev. W. Carey Walters, confirmation services have been held annually, with great success; and I have no doubt they would be equally successful in other places if they were taken up with the same spirit of zeal and enthusiasm. In some cases where similar services have been held, there has been an apparent unwillingness to call them by the name by which they are generally known. There seems to be some prejudice against the name 'confirmation,' and thus we sometimes hear instead of dedication services, consecration services, or recognition services. Many of our people object to anything which they consider 'churchy'; they have a dislike to anything which is borrowed from the Episcopalians. But unless we are to be altogether different from other people, we may just as well borrow from the Episcopalians as from the Methodists, Independents, or Presbyterians. If any institution is good in itself, and worthy to be adopted on its own merits, we must not condemn it because it happens to be more closely associated with one or other of these denominations; and if we borrow a rite or ceremony, we had better borrow also the name by which it is known. If, therefore, we hold what are practically confirmation services, it is best to call them so, and not to disguise them under some other name. The suggested alternatives have the decided drawback that they are all in use to designate ceremonies of an entirely different character, and an undesirable ambiguity would thus be introduced. Dedication is perhaps the best of the three, but it is frequently used to denote a service which is a substitute for infant baptism: children are sometimes 'dedicated' without being christened. It is also used in connection with the opening of

places of worship; we hear of a church being dedicated. Consecration, likewise, is a term chiefly used in connection with churches, and also in connection with the setting apart of bishops and archbishops. Recognition services are held among the Independents and Baptists to celebrate the settlement of a new pastor, and are practically equivalent to installations. If, then, we adopt any of these terms we are more likely to be misunderstood than if we keep to the word confirmation, the meaning of which is well known, and not ambiguous. The name is very appropriate, because the object of the service is to confirm or strengthen those who take part in it; to establish them in the Christian faith, to fortify them against temptation, and to give them courage to fight the battle of life. This is the leading idea of the service, which finds its fitting expression in the prayer that God will 'strengthen his servants in their holy purpose' and confer upon them the seven-fold gifts of the Spirit: The spirit of wisdom and understanding; the spirit of counsel and strength; the spirit of knowledge and true godliness, and of the fear of the Lord."

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Unitarianism: What Is It?

A PERSONAL DEFINITION.

WE have chosen this topic because the Unitarian position is so widely misunderstood. Were we to ask 100 men outside of our own communion what our churches represent we fancy that 99 answers would be aside from the truth. We should be told by one that Unitarianism meant the denial of Christ's diety. Another would say that it was the denial of the doctrine of the "Blessed Trinity." Another, the denial of the atonement. The impression is in the air that we have nothing to offer but negations—that we represent nothing affirmative. We should not be surprised that this impression is abroad. Other churches represent regular systems of belief; a faith fashioned with much precision. They draw, distinctly, the charmed circle, beyond which there is only the second death and outer darkness for ever. That fact, combined with

the opposite one, that we have no authoritative system of doctrine to enforce, makes it not difficult to misconstrue our position. The term Unitarianism does not to-day clearly define our actual position. Certainly the designation is not obsolete, and cannot, therefore, be abandoned. We have still to deny the dogma of the Trinity, and to affirm the simple unity of God. But the unity of God is not our shibboleth; neither is the humanity of the Christ, nor any other article of faith. We stand to-day for *Freedom* and *Righteousness*. We take it that belief is a matter of the intellect rather than the heart, and that the capability of believing this or that is very much a matter of inherited tendency and disposition. Regarding theology as a most important science, it yet, in our church life, takes a secondary place. While our ministers are, perhaps, beyond those of other churches, studious and ardent theologians, we are not a theological community. Our study of theology intensifies our love of freedom from dogmatic and credal bonds. Wherever the pursuit of truth attracts we are free to travel. And we thus stand for freedom. (1) Because such freedom of mind is an ineradicable right. It is not the gift of political or ecclesiastical law. It is the gift of nature. No real faith can exist apart from intellectual conviction. The confession of what is not thoroughly believed is more immoral than the open avowal of deepest actual doubt. To guard against such mental immorality, we impose no article of faith, demand assent to no dogma. At the base of our church-life, lies the principle of freedom. (2) This freedom is requisite for progress in knowledge and truth. If we are not to abandon a discovered error, nor embrace a newly discovered truth, our growth of mind and conscience is at once arrested. Progress is the child of freedom. Had science kept within the limits of dogma, we should have been a barbarous nation still. But science, deaf to priestly anathema, quietly went on enquiring and demonstrating, and has thus become a moral, as well as a mental force in the world. Hazlett thought that astronomy removed the heavens afar off, whereas it only dispelled the child-dream of a blue or cloudy ceiling, resting on the mountain tops. But the dispelling of the child-dream awoke the larger mind of the man, and led to grander conceptions of the magnitude of the universe. And while the

freedom of science has removed the heavens and the genesis of the earth far from the altitude and the date of dogma, it has revealed the greatness and the glory of God. Nature with her ceaseless retributions and as ceaseless benevolences proclaims God to be at once just and good. Every advance made in our knowledge of the universe must modify our theology, our knowledge and science of God, and therefore demands that the mind be left free. (3) Then we stand for freedom, because without freedom you cannot justify personal responsibility. As we possess will we are accountable. It is true that being sociable creatures, mixed up in society, we have great social responsibilities. But we are not merely human atoms in a mass of humanity. We are distinct personalities, and cannot free ourselves from individual responsibility. We must each give an account of himself, not at some dimly distant tribunal, but here and now, to the ever-present judge within. To answer for ourselves at the inner tribunal; to plead a guilty or not guilty in reply to the accusing voice, we must be free to honour our own convictions; to affirm our own conscientious belief. To press upon us, under any inducement or any threat, the confession of a faith at variance with our most enlightened and cherished convictions is discordant with personal responsibility. Discerning these things, Unitarianism is not based upon dogma or creed; its first great principle is intellectual freedom. On the side of religion Unitarianism, simply defined, is righteousness of life. Perhaps no people value the intellect more highly than the members of our "household of faith." At the same time, no people have a deeper conviction of the insufficiency of the intellect alone to meet all the demands, and discharge all the duties of life, and so to do the will of God. The Unitarian does not reject the common theory of the atonement because he thinks lightly of sin, and is unconscious of the need of salvation, but because the theory is the very essence of unrighteousness. He would affirm that any scheme of government which provided, as a fundamental law, for the transference of the guilt and punishment of the guilty to the innocent, would be gravely immoral, and wanting the most essential element of spiritual healthiness—rectitude. We are often accused of sacrificing the justice to the mercy of God. No indictment could

be more unfounded. While we repudiate an angry, we believe in a just God. That belief gives emphasis to our plea for goodness of life. The sinner *must* suffer and *does* suffer. His entail of guilt cannot be cut off. God is just, and has inseparably united sin and suffering. It is vicarious suffering which magnifies the mercy at the cost of the justice of God. No faith can wipe out the evils of life. To escape condemnation, the life must be pure. The two great elements in personal religion are to be good and to do good. Goodness reveals God, and leads the soul to God. No goodness can be of the nature of sin; no sin can be transposed into goodness. To the Unitarian, goodness and righteousness is an eternal spirit of beauty and power. He loves goodness for its own sake; "Not because he hopes for heaven thereby." In him the love of goodness grows even as to a passionate earnestness. Goodness is the symbol of God. In the human heart it is the life of God. Jesus, as a son of God, has ever a place in our reverent admiration and love which no other guide or teacher has gained. Not because he came to pay our debt—that would be a selfish love—but because of the beauty, the tenderness, the purity, the self-sacrifice, the divineness of his life—a true life of God, lived by a human soul. Unitarianism, on the side of religion, is such a life: the life of Christ re-lived in his disciples, a life which is actuated by the spirit of Jesus, loving truth and man and God. Thus the second principle of Unitarianism is righteousness, purity, goodness of life as the revelations and symbols of a life which is perfect in God alone. These are the principles which we represent; and by these we justify our existence: Freedom and righteousness—the active forces of all progress, the true sources of all well-being.

THE EDITOR.

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A LIBERAL RELIGIOUS MAGAZINE.—Messrs. Williams and Norgate publish one of the best of our monthly journals for a shilling, in *The Christian Reformer*, which commences its third half yearly volume with the number for January. Professor J. H. Godwin, commences a series of articles on "The Idea of Personality and the Doctrine of the Trinity" and other contributions on "Phases of Early Christianity," "The Fourth Gospel," "The Theology of St. Paul," and "Sundays in Strange Temples," are promised respectively by Professor J. Estlin Carpenter, the Rev. C. Hargrove, the Rev. Philemon Moore, and the Rev. A. Chalmers.

CHURCH NEWS.

ASHFORD.

Population, 8,500; Place of Worship, the Unitarian Christian Church, Hempsted Street; Founded, 1875; Seating accommodation, 400; Congregation, 55 to 60; Minister, the Rev. A. J. Marchant, 4, Clarendon Villas, Hythe Road; Secretary and Treasurer, Mr. W. G. Murrell, 8, East Street; Committee, Messrs. Burden, Gibbs, Harrison, Jordan, Kew, Piper, Rawlinson, and Wood; Sunday Service, 6.30 p.m.; Hymns, Dr. Martineau's; Prayers, the Ten Services; Church work—School on Sundays at 11.0 a.m. and 3.0 p.m., entertainment on Mondays during the winter, cottage meetings on Wednesdays, choir practice on Thursdays.

The Editor trusts to have it in his power soon to publish some interesting accounts of the labours of the Ashford Church, which has been a devoted and staunch witness of the cause, though only about ten years old.

BATTLE.

Population, 3,500; Place of Worship, Christ (Unitarian) Church, Mount Street; Founded, 1789; Seating accommodation, 320; Congregation, 20 to 30; Preachers, students of Manchester New College on the first Sunday in every month, and local and Hastings laymen; Secretary, Mr. Lewis J. Burgess, 65, High Street; Treasurer, Miss Ann Burgess, 74, High Street; Sunday service, 7.0 p.m.; Hymns, Dr. Martineau's.

The Church here during 1886, both numerically and financially, has kept about the same. It cannot be said with accuracy that the membership has increased, although on several occasions the attendances have been far above the average, but there have been throughout the year signs of renewed life and activity, which are a little encouraging. Early in April, singing practices were commenced in order to prepare some anthems for the Good Friday meeting. It would be well if these practices could be made a regular weekly or fortnightly thing, though the present state of the congregation hardly renders this practicable. Good Friday, April 23rd, proved to be a beautifully bright and sunny day. It was gratifying to see so many friends from Hastings and elsewhere present on this occasion. After a very social tea, Mr. Edwards, following the time-honoured custom, distributed to various gentlemen the sentiments of the evening written on slips of

paper, which included the topics, "Christian Unity," "May the Spirit of Christ be Among us Always," "Religious Freedom," "Friends Present," and "Friends Absent." The chair was taken by the Rev. J. C. Williams, of Hastings, whose remarks were most happily put, and always to the point. The choir sang between the speeches appropriate anthems and hymns, in the rendering of which some Hastings singers gave welcome assistance. This gathering was quite a brilliant success, being most cordial and hearty throughout. On Easter Sunday a special sermon was preached by the Rev. J. C. Williams. Professor Drummond, Principal of Manchester New College, was kind enough to come and take the service on June 6th, and a large congregation came to hear him, several strangers being present. On Sunday, August 8th, and Sunday, August 27th, Professor Roger de Goey, of Ostend, occupied the pulpit. The service on Sunday, September 5th, was taken by the Rev. J. C. Williams, who was staying in Battle for a week or two, the preacher selecting as the subject of his discourse, "Worship." On the following Sunday, September 12th, Mr. Williams dealt with "Christ and His Enemies." On Sunday, October 3rd, a harvest thanksgiving service was held in the chapel, which was very tastefully decorated. This was the first time a meeting of this sort had been held in the church, and it was instituted on this occasion at the suggestion of the Rev. J. C. Williams, who himself occupied the rostrum. He preached an excellent sermon. It would be well if the connection between the churches in the district could be drawn even closer than it is at present, in order that what working power we possess may be distributed, cultivated, and used to the best advantage. This might be very well brought about by a more frequent exchange of pulpits by the various ministers in this part of the country. Besides those already mentioned, the services have been conducted by students from Manchester New College, amongst whom may be mentioned Mr. Fripp, Mr. Felix Taylor, and Mr. Smith. Mr. Kenward, of Hastings, has rendered invaluable aid to the church, being most regular in his help, and no doubt it would prove a rest and relief to that gentleman if his work could be lightened a little in this respect by other Hastings friends. The remaining services have been distributed

amongst Mr. Edwards, Mr. W. Edwards, and Mr. W. H. Burgess. Arrangements have been made for a course of lectures to be delivered in the chapel during January, by the Rev. J. C. Williams, and Mr. J. Macer Wright, who have both kindly offered their services. Mr. Williams commenced the series on Tuesday, January 4th, with "Savonarola, or A Voice in the Wilderness," and will be followed on Tuesday, January 11th, by "Gleanings of Wisdom and Humour," by Mr. Wright. On Tuesday, January 18th, Mr. Williams will deal with "Luther, or A Struggle for Freedom of Conscience," and Mr. Wright will close the course with "Dickens' Tale of Two Cities," on Tuesday, January 25th. "I hope," says the gentleman to whom we are indebted for this review of the work in 1886 at Battle, "that the year just begun so well will prove to be a year of renewed activity and earnest labour, which will show its fruits if not in an increased membership at least in an increased sympathy with our liberal religious tenets and an increased stimulus to private inquiry."

BRIGHTON.

Population, 137,700; Place of Worship, the Free Christian Church, New Road, near the Pavilion Gardens; Founded, 1824; Seating accommodation, 350; Congregation, 130 to 150; Minister, the Rev. Alfred Hood, 14, Charlotte Street, Marine Parade; Committee, the Rev. T. R. Dobson, and Messrs. E. G. Brown, W. Burgess, F. Hilton, J. A. Kemp, G. E. F. Thompson, J. T. Verrall, H. Ward, W. Wilmshurst, and F. T. Wilson; Sunday services, 11.0 a.m. and 7.0 p.m.; Hymns, Dr. Martineau's; Prayers, the Ten Services; Church Work—Sunday School, Dorcas Society, Bible Class, Library, Monthly Social Meetings during the winter.

The past year's history of the Free Christian Church in Brighton, if it has not been in the ordinary sense of the word eventful, has yet been marked by an occurrence which is always an important one in the life of a congregation—a change of ministry. In the early part of the year the late minister of the Church, the Rev. T. R. Dobson, resigned his office, having held it during rather more than 11 years. During the three or four months following this event several applicants for the vacant pulpit offered themselves, some of whom were invited to preach as candidates. Among these was the Rev. A. Hood, of Bournemouth, and after due consideration this gentleman was by a unanimous vote of

the congregation appointed to be their pastor. Mr. Hood has now been in Brighton some 4 or 5 months, and during that time the life of the Church has been marked by a healthy activity. A series of Sunday evening discourses, given by Mr. Hood on popular and attractive subjects, has been well attended by people who evidently came not merely to pass an idle hour, but to listen earnestly to the preacher's words, and let us remember that it is among just this class that good work may be done by Unitarians; and the class is a large and increasing one, composed of thoughtful persons, who are in search of a reasonable religion. Let a preacher offer such a religion, doing so in such a way as to show that he is in earnest—himself believing the things he asks others to believe—and hearers belonging to this class will be sure to gather round him. Perhaps of these only a few may remain as permanent members of the congregation, for the rest whatever becomes of them, wherever they may go, they will surely take with them some seed of truth which will not be lost, but in due time will germinate and grow, and bear fruit after its kind in some life on lives. Thus it is that "the thoughts of men are widened." Of this good work Mr. Hood is surely doing his part at Brighton by these lectures. The discourses were decently reported in the local journals and gave rise to a newspaper controversy in which Mr. Hood showed himself quite able to hold his own. He is now giving another series of Sabbath night addresses on such subjects as "The Gospel Preached by Christ," "Christ and Modern Theology," "Faith in Christ," and "The Place of Christ in History." The Sunday School, established some 7 or 8 years ago, maintains its position under the care of its two superintendents—Mr. W. Slatter and Mr. F. Wilson. A Bible class under the care of Mr. Hood meets every week, and is a source of much benefit to the chapel. To the other institutions of the church a Dorcas Society has recently been added, meeting weekly during the winter months. The congregation like most others, has had its difficulties, but it has lived through them, and knowing that among its members there are those who have done and are still ready to do good work in, and for the cause, the church looks on to the new year with a strong hope that it may be a year of true healthy growth, both within and without. Steady

perseverance in spreading the principles of Unitarianism in Brighton, will show satisfactory fruit even yet. We do not belong to those "who think to conquer the world by flinging themselves like a pound of fresh butter on the face of it," as Thomas Carlyle puts it when inveighing in an aside against "sodden-eyed Exeter-Hall 'Christianity'!" in a letter to his friend Mr. Edward Fitzgerald.

CANTERBURY.

Population, 24,000; Place of Worship, the Unitarian Church, Blackfriars; Minister, the Rev. A. J. Marchant, 4, Clarendon Villas, Hythe Road, Ashford; Secretary, Mr. George Brothers, Vernon House, Old Dover Road; Sunday Service, 10.30 a.m.; Hymns, Dr. Martineau's.

We hope to be able to give our readers some intelligence of Unitarian work in this ancient city in our next issue, but at present we are unable to do so, as no news has been sent in to us for publication.

HASTINGS.

Population, 56,000; Place of Worship, the Unitarian Christian Church, South Terrace; Founded 1867; seating accommodation, 250; congregation, 50 to 60; Minister, the Rev. J. Clayton Williams, 19, Mann Street; Secretary and Treasurer, Mr. T. W. Kenward, 87, London Road, St. Leonards; Committee, Messrs. C. J. G. Eiloart, A. W. Elliott, J. Martin, A. Miles, and J. Barr, Miss Cotton, Miss S. Ballard and Mrs. L. Anthony; Sunday services, 11 a.m. and 6.30 p.m.; Hymns, Dr. Martineau's; Prayers, The Ten Services. Church work—Devotional Service and Choir Practice on Wednesdays; Mutual Improvement Society meeting on Thursday; Library of over 300 volumes open after every Sunday morning service.

What have the Unitarians done in Hastings during the past year? Some would say, "A great deal," whilst others would think, "Nothing at all." The real answer probably lies, as in most similar cases, between these two, and in that light it will be best to look at the matter. The work our church has to do is of such an unobtrusive kind that it takes a long time for its influence to be observed, and yet no one who knows what that work is will deny that it is as Canon Fremantle justly puts it, to be "a constant witness of simplicity and spirituality" in "the sphere of true religion." The congregation has held its ground numerically, and from a financial point of view has had nothing to complain

of. Including the grants, nearly £130 was collected during the twelve months. The pastorate, which had been vacant since June, 1885, was finally filled in February last by the Rev. J. Clayton Williams, who removed to Hastings from Guildford. He was selected from amongst several candidates, and so far has given uniform satisfaction. He has occupied the pulpit on most Sabbath days, dealing usually with subjects of general religious interest, though occasionally venturing on controversial ground. He also gave a course of Sunday evening lectures on "The History of Dogma," which attracted some attention. Professor Roger de Goey, of Ostend, took charge of the church during Mr. Williams's summer holiday, and his scholarly ministrations were much appreciated by the congregation. On Sunday, October 3rd, Professor James Drummond, the Principal of Manchester New College, preached the first annual sermons in commemoration of the laying of the memorial stone of the church on October 2nd, 1867. It is a rather strange fact that nearly 18 years should have been allowed to elapse before this important event began to be celebrated, but now a start has been effected it is to be hoped that the special services will be carried out every year. Dr. Drummond was listened to by large congregations with that attention which his position and influence deserve. He represents a prominent school of theological thought in the Unitarian body, and his ideas on any religious subject naturally have considerable weight with members of the denomination. He selected for his text in the morning part of the fifth verse of the fifteenth chapter of the Gospel according to John: "I am the vine, ye are the branches," and in the sermon which he based upon it, he laid down his views on an ideal religious church. His evening discourse, which was a very eloquent one, was founded on the fifth and sixth verses of the third chapter of Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians: "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God, who also hath made us able ministers of the New Testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." On the following Sabbath day a harvest thanksgiving festival was carried out at the chapel, and though the weather was somewhat unfavourable, there were

good congregations at both services. The building was tastefully and prettily decorated, the chief ornamentation being under the pulpit, where fruit, vegetables, flowers, cereals, and plants were all crowded together in tasteful though lavish profusion. The ordinary ritual was observed with specially selected hymns, and the anthem, "How beautiful upon the mountains," was sung by the choir. The pastor preached the sermons, and succeeded in delivering excellent and appropriate discourses. His text in the morning was selected from the 9th verse of the sixth chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Galatians: "In due season we shall reap if we faint not," and in the evening he chose as the subject of his remarks a portion of the 39th verse of the 13th chapter of the Gospel according to Matthew: "The harvest is the end of the world." In both homilies he endeavoured to impress upon his hearers the necessity of sowing only those sound seeds which would afterwards bring rich spiritual, moral, and intellectual harvests, for the same law which governed material and physical things of an analogous nature also directed the origin, development, and fruition of the matter planted in the cultivated fields of men's higher senses and inner lives. On Sunday, December 5th, whilst Mr. Williams was away at Northiam, the Rev. Henry Ierson came down to Hastings and preached a couple of excellent sermons. His discourses, indeed, were much enjoyed. Towards the end of October, Wednesday evening devotional services were started, in which laymen have taken a part, and though the meetings have not been largely attended, the young men who have assisted at them have thereby had opportunities of self-improvement in pulpit and desk work, which are not to be despised. The incidental labours of the congregation have prospered fairly well. The South Terrace Mutual Improvement Society has gone through some especially good half-sessions. The programme of the last portion of the 1885-6 meetings—January to April—besides incidental proceedings, such as singing, questioning, impromptu speaking, reading and reciting, including a paper on "Spelling Reform," by Mr. W. Coles, a lecture on "Spiritualism," by Mr. H. T. Proctor, an address on "Dickens' Bleak House," by Mr. J. Macer Wright, a paper entitled "Something about Insects," by Mr.

W. H. Bennett, and some sketches of "George Stephenson," by Mr. M. Deeprose. Oliver Goldsmith's fine play, *The Good Natured Man*, was also read by the members, and Mrs. Jessie Routh gave two extremely pleasant evenings of recitations. Mr. E. Cook's subject, "A Chat about Water," was capitally handled, and all who heard them appreciated Mr. William Ransom's lecture on "Self-Culture," and the Rev. J. C. Williams's on "Gerald Massey." This half-session closed with an enjoyable tea and entertainment, and the first portion of the 1886-7 gatherings—October to December—opened in a somewhat similar manner. The other evenings were occupied by readings, singing, organ recitals, impromptu speaking, and lectures. The papers comprised, "Books, and How to Read Them," by Mr. Williams, "Ancient Greece in its Relation to Christianity," by Mr. John Stuart, "A Sketch of the Life of Albany Fonblanque," by Mr. T. W. Kenward, and "Milton as a Prose Writer," by Mr. William Ransom. The last meeting of the half-session was a "pour out," an entertainment which gave much physical and mental pleasure to the members, for which they were greatly indebted to Mrs. and Miss Miles. These gatherings have proved very profitable, and a large amount of "mutual improvement" must have taken place. On Wednesday, July 14th, the Society carried out one of its annual excursions, the party on this occasion going to Pevensey, near Eastbourne. The weather proved beautifully fine, notwithstanding the bad outlook of the previous night and of the same morning, and though the wind was rather rough, the elements on the whole were very favourable to the enjoyment of the pleasure-seekers. The company, which numbered about 40, left Hastings soon after noon by train, and on reaching Pevensey at once made for the castle, which was to be the headquarters of the party whilst in the village. Most of them stayed in the fortress, playing at "rounders" or "French tag," or even indulging in "swinging," whilst others strolled off into the hamlet itself to inspect the ancient churches, to look over the exterior of the many old houses of quaint architecture abounding in this defunct municipality, and to get a glimpse of the outside of the little Town Hall where the Corporation used to sit when they were in existence, before Sir

Charles Dilke's Act swept them out of municipal life. Tea was partaken of at the usual hour, and thoroughly enjoyed by all. There were more games in the evening, and dancing by moonlight on the green, so that when the proper time came the company were quite ready to start for home. This was certainly one of the most pleasant outings the members and friends of the association have yet had. Miss Miles, all through 1886, again took charge of the musical portion of the services, and under her direction the congregational gatherings have been much enhanced in many pleasing and artistic respects. The usual annual collections have been made in the church for the British and Foreign Unitarian Association, and on the last Sunday of the old year the offertories were taken on behalf of the fund which was raised for the widows and orphans of the drowned crew of the local fishing smack, the *Fane and Elizabeth*, which was wrecked off Hythe early in December. The church library has not been extensively used during the year, and it would be perhaps a useful move if members of the congregation would take out the books and lend them more widely to their friends. It may be considered then that the Hastings Unitarians have not been idle during 1886, but that they have worked as hard as they could to spread those fundamental principles of their body which they hold so dear—freedom of conscience and righteousness of life.

HORSHAM.

Population, 10,500; Place of Worship, the Free Christian Church, Worthing Road; Founded 1720, Seating accommodation, 150; Congregation 60 to 90; Minister, the Rev. John Taylor, Fernside House, North Parade; Secretary, Mr. S. Price, West Street; Treasurer, Mr. H. Nash; Deacons, Messrs. James Kensett and S. Burgess; Committee, Messrs. W. Nash, W. Kensett, D. M. G. Price, G. W. Bradford, and J. Cheale, Mrs. Rowland, Miss Rowland, and Miss Hazelden; Sunday Services, 11 a.m. and 6.30 p.m.; Hymns, Dr. Martineau's. Church work—School on Sundays both morning and afternoon, Library of over 3000 volumes, open on Wednesdays from 2 to 3.15 and from 7.30 to 9 p.m.

On the whole it may be said that in all that relates to the several activities of the Horsham Church, the year 1886 bears a fair record. After the inclement weather of the last winter, the attendance at the Sunday services, which had been small, gradually

improved and has continued good up to the present time, sometimes numbering about 100 persons. During the winter months courses of lectures have been given, which have drawn together a large company of the townspeople in addition to the usual congregation. The biggest assembly was on the occasion of an address on "Have Unitarians a Bible of their own?"—in reply to an accusation made at a public meeting. The church was crowded and considerable interest excited in the town. Eleven members have been added to the roll during the year, bringing up the number to 91. As a set off to that, however, we have to note the loss by death of one or two old worshippers, and by removal several, including the Rev. T. W. Scott, who has accepted the pulpit at Lydgate. Still the congregation may be said to be in a healthy condition, and likely to grow in the future as it has grown in the past few years. A good work, too, has been done by the Congregational Book Society, which by means of the library has circulated upwards of 6,760 volumes during 1886, including some of the best works of our Unitarian and other liberal authors. This library, consisting of upwards of 3,000 volumes, is open at a small charge to the whole town, and there can be no doubt it has a wide and liberalizing influence over a large portion of the public. Members of every sect in the place subscribe to it. Over £20 worth of books has been added during the year. About 60 names are on the Sunday School Register, and at the present time there is a good staff of teachers. Over 20 of the elder scholars and friends spent one day at the Colonial Exhibition, and about 100 scholars, teachers and members of the congregation had a very pleasant outing to Holmbush Tower. An exceedingly successful tea meeting was held on Good Friday, and the Whit-Sunday anniversary was satisfactory in every way.

LEWES.

Population, 8000; Place of Worship, the Westgate Unitarian Chapel, High Street; Founded 1687; Seating accommodation 300; Congregation 50 to 60; Minister, the Rev. Charles Davis Badland, M.A., 11, St. Ann's Crescent; Secretary, Mr. Joseph Shelley, 72, High Street; Sunday services, 11 a.m. and 6.30 p.m.; Hymns, Dr. Martineau's; Prayers, The Ten Services. Church work—Sunday School, Library, Children's Singing Class, Sewing Meeting.

Lewes is another place of which we are not yet able to supply details of recent Unitarian work, though we trust to be able to do this in time. It may be said that generally the church has held its own and that the quiet labours of the members of the chapel have not been without an influence from which much good may result.

NORTHIAM.

Population, 1300 ; Place of Worship, the Unitarian General Baptist Church, Hermon Hill ; Founded 1818 ; Seating accommodation, 150 ; Congregation, 40 to 50 ; Preachers, Laymen from Battle, Hastings and Rye ; Sunday service, 6.30 p.m. ; Hymns, Dr. Martineau's.

The Northiam church was re-opened for divine worship on Sunday, July 25th last, after being closed for over five years. This desirable event was brought about by the efforts of Hastings friends, at the suggestion in the first place of Mr. W. H. Bennett, to whom the thanks of our body generally are due for his very useful and profitable ideas in this respect. The matter was taken up warmly by the Rev. H. Ierson of London, and the Rev. J. C. Williams, the minister at Hastings, and aided cordially by Mr. Alfred Comport of Northiam, the movement was eventually crowned with complete success. Mr. Ierson himself preached the inaugural sermon which was delivered to a fairly large congregation. Indeed, considering the state of the weather, which was far from favourable, and the fact that the old worshippers had been scattered for such a lengthened period, the attendance was very good. The majority, if not all, of those present entered heartily into the service, threw themselves cordially into the singing, and listened attentively to the preacher's instructive and eloquent discourse. Mr. Ierson selected for his text the third and fourth verses of the one hundred and thirtieth Psalm : " If thou shouldest observe iniquities, O Jehovah, O Jehovah, who could stand ? But with Thee is forgiveness, that Thou mayest be revered." He congratulated the Unitarians of Northiam and the district on once more having their church open for public worship, and trusted that great blessings would result from the enterprise. He dwelt much upon the real objects of Jesus's mission, and upon the excellence of forgiving wrongs. The services have since been conducted by laymen from Hastings, St.

Leonards, Battle and Rye, with three exceptions when Mr. Williams and Professor Roger de Goey of Belgium occupied the pulpit. Various popular subjects have been dealt with, such as " Reason and Religion," " The Inspiration of the Bible," " The Problem of Evil," " Christ and Righteousness," " The Infallibility of the Bible," " The People's Religion," " The French Huguenots," " What is Unitarianism ?" and " Liberty of Conscience," and it is hoped that much instruction has been conveyed, and a freer spirit of enquiry stimulated. For their labours at Northiam, a great deal of praise should be awarded, amongst others to Mr. W. H. Bennett, and Mr. A. Miles, of Hastings, Mr. G. Frisby, of St. Leonards, Mr. W. H. Burgess, of Battle, and Mr. Thomas Gasson, of Rye. There was a debt of about £80 on the chapel at the outset, but thanks to Mr. Ierson, £50 of this amount has already been paid off. Mr. Alfred Comport and Mr. William Comport both deserve to be honourably mentioned for their care of the church during the time it has remained closed, and for the interest they have shown in the movement, which recommenced and still carries on its services. Before long, it is to be hoped a Committee, Secretary, Treasurer, and other officers will be appointed, and that the affairs of the chapel will be under proper business control. There is a wide field for energetic action in the district, and if the work is well conducted and zealously prosecuted, there is no doubt that the results will more than justify the re-opening of this old and picturesque place of worship.

RYE.

Population, 4,500 ; Place of Meeting, Mr. Thomas Gasson's Furniture Stores, Cinque Ports Street ; Unitarian Service the first Sunday in every month at 2.30 p.m.

The Unitarians in Rye have only just begun to make a stand as a separate religious community. It is not four months ago that services were commenced in the form of classes at the houses of one or two friends, but it has now been definitely decided that a meeting shall be held regularly once every four weeks. The congregation, if such it can be termed, only numbers about 8 or 9 persons, but great

things spring from small beginnings and it may yet prove to be the nucleus of a most flourishing church. It is a great pity that some missionary cannot conduct a few months' mission in this venerable town, and thus give our principles a fair chance of leavening what Mr. Ierson rightly calls an "ancient mass." A good many tracts have been distributed about the place, principally Copeland Bowie's "Plea for Unitarian Christianity," B. Glover's "What do Unitarian Christians Believe?" and C. J. Perry's "Unitarianism an Affirmative Faith." Mr. Thomas Gasson, Mr. James Harvey, Mr. W. Freeland, Mr. William Harvey, and Mr. S. Clark are especially to be commended for the fearless stand they have made for freedom of thought and liberty of conscience in connection with the Unitarian cause at Rye. They have had to endure scorn and persecution which does not often fall to the lot of people in these days, and have proved themselves worthy of the faith in the service of which they have now enlisted. Their secession from the church with which they were previously connected, and the efforts they have made to defend their action in this respect have already done much good, and even at this early stage their influence in their new religious position is being powerfully felt. Mr. W. H. Bennett, Mr. A. Miles, and other laymen of Hastings have rendered some help to the class which has been founded, and with continued assistance from this quarter there can be no doubt the work at Rye will grow and expand. "The 'little cloud' . . . like a man's hand" is spreading among our friends," writes one of the most active members of the embryo congregation, "who from first despising and persecuting us now behave quite charitably towards us. There are among them indeed," he naively adds, "some young men who are actually beginning to question even the infallibility of ministers and clergymen." We are sure all our supporters in the district will cordially wish success to the labours of the Unitarians at Rye, and be prepared to extend to them a helping hand whenever necessary. But it will be well for the new members of our communion in this decaying seaport when they thoroughly recognise the wisdom of relying on their own energetic efforts, and really feel how essential progressive work is to their religious vitality. They must now press on

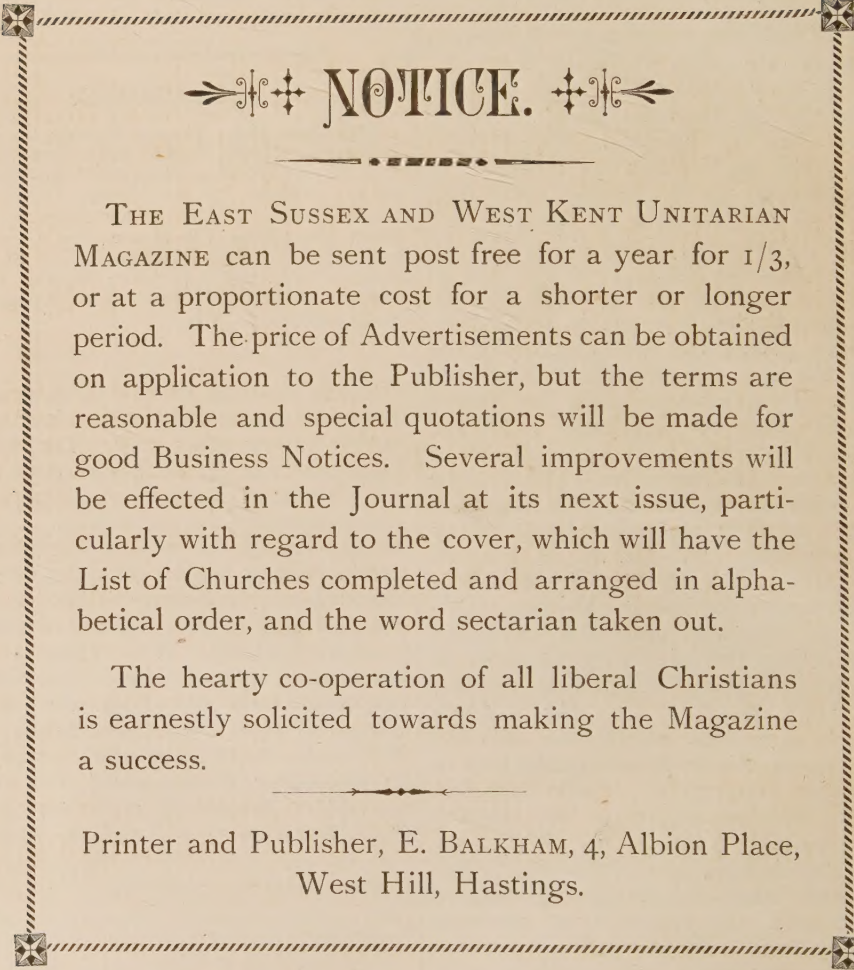
vigorously in the way they have chosen—if they halt they will in all probability fall back for ever into spiritual oblivion. The liberty of the intellect in theological matters is too precious a thing to be trifled with, and those who believe this will strive untiringly to bring others into the same joyous freedom. It is one of the conditions of our existence in such a purely unfettered state of mind.

TENTERDEN.

Population, 3600; Place of Worship, the Unitarian Presbyterian Chapel, Ashford Road; Founded, before 1700; Seating accommodation, 220; Congregation, 110 to 120; Minister, the Rev. Robert Cooper Dendy, Chapel House, Ashford Road; Secretary, Mr. J. Munn Mace, Belle Vue House, East Cross; Treasurer, Mr. J. E. Mace, Ashford Road; Sunday services, 11 a.m. and 6.30 p.m.; Hymns, Dr. Martineau's; Prayers, the Ten Services. Church work—Sunday School.

The Unitarians have worked steadily at Tenterden during 1886, and as hard perhaps as they have in other years. They have not lost ground, and even if they have not numerically increased, their principles must have silently leavened the community. The usual services have been conducted regularly with varying success, and have been uniformly well attended, and the Sunday School has formed a fallow field in which plenty of good seed has been scattered. We can promise for the future some better notices of denominational enterprise in this little town, which we think will go to prove that the Unitarianism in Kent to-day is still of that sterling stuff which so thoroughly revolutionised the religious thought of the county in the early years of this century.





NOTICE.

THE EAST SUSSEX AND WEST KENT UNITARIAN MAGAZINE can be sent post free for a year for 1/3, or at a proportionate cost for a shorter or longer period. The price of Advertisements can be obtained on application to the Publisher, but the terms are reasonable and special quotations will be made for good Business Notices. Several improvements will be effected in the Journal at its next issue, particularly with regard to the cover, which will have the List of Churches completed and arranged in alphabetical order, and the word sectarian taken out.

The hearty co-operation of all liberal Christians is earnestly solicited towards making the Magazine a success.

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